

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 11, 2003

ADOPT-A-WATERSHED EDUCATION PROGRAM

File No. 03-150
Project Manager: Neal Fishman

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$50,000 to Adopt-A-Watershed to carry out a program of watershed education designed for students in grades kindergarten through 12.

LOCATION: Coastal and Inland Counties

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Coastal Education

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31000 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) to Adopt-A-Watershed to establish and support teams of educators, resource managers, and interested citizens and organizations, to provide environmental education programs to elementary, middle and high schools, focusing on the functioning, protection and restoration of watersheds. This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of any Conservancy funds, Adopt-A-Watershed shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer a work program including a detailed project budget and schedule for completion of project tasks.
2. Conservancy funding shall be acknowledged in publications/curricula produced as a result of this project, in a manner which has been reviewed and approved by the Executive Officer.
3. The program shall meet State Board of Education adopted content standards and the other requirements of Public Resources Code Section 31119(a)(2).”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31119 regarding educational projects and programs.
 2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
 3. The proposed program is consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, approved on June 4, 2003.
 4. Adopt-A-Watershed is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code."
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends authorization to disburse up to \$50,000 to Adopt-A-Watershed (AAW), a nonprofit organization, to establish and support teams of educators, resource managers, and interested citizens and organizations to provide environmental education programs to elementary, middle, and high schools, focusing on the functioning, protection, and restoration of watersheds. AAW has been developing such programs for the past 12 years. It has trained more than 20,000 teachers and other team members, who annually provide watershed-based environmental education to 200,000 students. The program operates in 26 states, Puerto Rico, Pacific Islands, China, and Uganda.

Specifically, AAW uses its expertise and knowledge of a wide range of curriculum to train teams to establish watershed-based learning programs in local school districts. AAW provides three weeks of intensive training and assessment to local teams of educators and community leaders who are committed to establishing place-based science curriculum in their local schools. Once trained, these teams establish programs one at a time in schools. They provide curriculum and training to administrators and teachers in these schools. In most cases AAW teams also link the schools up with particular watershed groups in their vicinity. Student groups often work on the restoration of watersheds and streams, monitor stream function, and educate the surrounding community about the values and sensitivities of watersheds.

Conservancy funds would be used to support coastal and/or San Francisco Bay Area watershed teams. These funds would help to pay for team training and other activities needed to bring these teams to specific school districts. As is always the case with AAW programs, each team would be trained in materials relevant to their particular areas. Materials would be consistent with State science curriculum standards. There would be outreach to ensure that underserved areas and non-coastal areas have benefit of these programs.

The development of coastal/San Francisco Bay teams is expected to have lasting benefits. These teams would help to establish programs in many different schools over a period of years. These school-based programs would increase interest in watershed protections and restoration. In many cases children would participate in watershed restoration and monitoring.

Site Description: AAW would use Conservancy funds to establish teams in coastal and San Francisco Bay Counties and in schools designated as the program is developed. There would be outreach to non-coastal areas.

Project History: In January 2003, new legislation went into effect expressly authorizing the Conservancy to fund educational programs and projects for students in grades kindergarten through 12 that relate to the Conservancy's programs. AWW contacted Conservancy staff about its program in recent months. AAW has worked with other State departments and has received more than \$1,000,000 for its programs from the CALFED program.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy

\$50,000

Conservancy funds are expected to come from the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account, California License Plate Fund. The purpose of the referenced License Plate Fund account includes coastal natural resource and enhancement projects, as well as other projects consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

Public Resources Code Section 31119 authorizes the Conservancy to undertake educational projects and programs for pupils in kindergarten through 12, which relate to the preservation, protection, enhancement, and maintenance of coastal resources. The Conservancy may award grants to nonprofit organizations for that purpose. Further, the legislation provides several criteria that an educational grant program must fulfill: The program must meet State Board of Education adopted content standards; grantees must use a portion of any funding to promote maximum participation of pupils and schools by providing scholarships or grants for that purpose; and any nonprofit organization must document increased pupil participation in its educational programs, provide outreach to low-income, underserved, and noncoastal areas; and maintain any data necessary for evaluation, as determined by the Conservancy.

The AAW program meets all these criteria. The program will focus on sciences related to watershed protection and restoration and will meet State Board of Education content standards for various grade levels in science and other curricula. Conservancy staff will work with AAW to develop meaningful inland and underserved community outreach, a scholarship program, and evaluation criteria and data to document pupil participation in the program.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S
STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Providing public education is a statutory authority under Section 31119 of the Public Resources Code. While it is not a stand-alone program of the Conservancy, public education has always been integral to Conservancy projects. Consistent with **Goal 5 Objectives A, B, and C** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, the proposed project will help protect, restore, and enhance biological diversity in coastal areas.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** Letters of support are included in Exhibit 1.
4. **Location:** The AAW program will focus on coastal resources. The program will be carried out in coastal areas, but consistent with the intent of Section 31119, there will be outreach to non-coastal areas.
5. **Need:** AAW's programs are ongoing with multiple funding sources in many states. However, specific teams affecting the coast would not be formed without the Conservancy's assistance. The Conservancy's grant will lead to many more schools and students being given this curriculum than would be the case without this funding.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The AAW program will take place in various regions in the State, including the Bay Area and other populous regions.

Additional Criteria

9. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

Development of an educational program does not have the potential to result in a physical change to the environment, and therefore does not constitute a "project" for purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as defined in 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15378.